Marshall Epstein ’74, M’78, says he started working on the family farm early, picking strawberries at the age of 3. “Well, maybe I ate more than I picked,” he laughs.

Epstein is the third generation of his family to run what is now Rosedale Farms and Vineyards in Simsbury, Conn. The original was founded by his grandfather, Morris Epstein, 90 years ago with the slogan “You can whip our butter, but you can’t beat our milk!”

What began as a 40-acre family farm focused on dairy cattle and a tobacco crop grew over the years in size—it’s now 110 acres—and production to include vegetables, an apple orchard, and, more recently, flowers and a vineyard.

Epstein received a bachelor’s and an MBA in marketing from the Barney School of Business, where he met Peter LaPlaca, professor of marketing. Epstein calls his former professor a role model and has kept in touch over the years. He says his Barney degrees have helped considerably, both in his first jobs at CIGNA and Society for Savings in Hartford and in the ongoing balancing act involved in keeping a small farm afloat.

For decades the core business at Rosedale Farms has been producing fresh, high-quality fruits and vegetables, and that has not changed. Several local restaurants serve Rosedale produce.

In addition, Epstein has partnered with Max Restaurant Group and Chef Scott Miller to serve gourmet meals, called Chef to Farm Dinners, prepared at the farm using Rosedale produce and wine as well as local meats, poultry, and fish.

In the late 1990s a chat with good friend and neighbor Charles Stephenson led to winemaking on the farm. With Stephenson, who owns a small vineyard adjacent to Rosedale, as the vintner, the 3-acre vineyard has won medals in several prestigious wine competitions, beginning with its first vintage in 2005.

The most recognized is Lou’s Red, named after Epstein’s father, which won a gold medal in the 2009 Big E Wine Competition and a double gold medal at the 2010 Vineyard & Winery International Eastern Wine Competition in Watkins Glen, N.Y., in May. In October, Rosedale introduced its newest vintage, Winter Red, a pinot noir. It is the vineyard’s seventh wine, joining two reds, three whites, and a blush. Epstein says the vineyard currently produces close to 10,000 bottles each year.

Like many other small farms and orchards, Rosedale has expanded its offerings through “agritourism”—adding a corn maze, hay rides, wine tastings, private parties, and produce and wine memberships—all in the interest of bringing more people to the farm.

“We’re always trying to expand our brand, to raise the visibility of the farm,” says Epstein. “Every successful business has their eye out for the next new thing to keep their customers coming.”

But the innovations don’t stop there. Today, Epstein and his wife, Lynn, are joined by the fourth generation of Epsteins at Rosedale: daughter Kate Epstein and daughter Lisa and son-in-law Jon Kozlowski help out on the farm. Epstein and Kozlowski are experimenting with hydroponics—growing vegetables in a soil-free medium and a solution of mineral nutrients. So far, they have grown lettuce and tomatoes, but Epstein says they are still in the learning process.

A new, two-tiered, hydroponic greenhouse will eventually allow fresh produce production well into the colder months.

All these activities make Epstein a very busy man, but he continues to find time for some consulting work and teaching. He has been an associate professor of marketing at the American International College in Springfield, Mass., for 30 years.

Epstein also finds time for the occasional Hawks basketball game, as do daughter Mandy; her husband, Mike McCullough; and their children, Kyle, Riley, and Keegan.